



National Transportation Safety Board

The Chairman's Corner

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Friday, December 14, 2007

NTSB Meets to Discuss Aviation and Highway Accidents

The National Transportation Safety Board met in a public Sunshine meeting on December 4, to discuss two transportation accidents. First on the agenda was the 2006 fire aboard a UPS cargo plane in Philadelphia, PA.



The Board recommended that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) require that all cargo airplanes operating under Part 121 Code of Federal Regulations install fire suppression systems.

The final report states that the probable cause of this accident was an in-flight fire that initiated from an unknown source within one of the containers in the main cargo compartment. The report concluded that the threat from cargo fires could be mitigated by the installation of fire suppression systems.

On February 7, 2006, about 11:59 pm (EST), United Parcel Service Company (UPS) flight 1307, a McDonnell Douglas DC-8-71F, landed at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after a cargo smoke indication in the cockpit. The flight crewmembers sustained minor injuries, and the airplane and most of the cargo were destroyed by fire after landing.

Although the aircraft carried in its cargo compartment lithium batteries similar to those that have been associated with previous in-flight fires, the exact origin and cause of this

in-flight fire could not be determined due to the destruction of potentially helpful evidence; however, available evidence suggests that the fire most likely originated in the main cargo compartment.

As a result of its investigation, the Safety Board made recommendations in the following areas: guidance and checklists relating to in-flight fire and smoke, certification requirements for smoke and fire detection system tests, fire suppression system requirements, aircraft rescue and firefighting training, cargo airplane emergency exit requirements, hazardous materials information and dissemination procedures, and transport of lithium batteries on board aircraft.

These recommendations were addressed to the Federal Aviation Administration, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, and the Cargo Airline Association.

In the second agenda item, the driver of a tractor trailer was cited as the cause of a fatal chain collision near Chelsea, Michigan in 2004.

On July 16, 2004, at about 12:00 p.m., near Chelsea, Michigan, a Kenworth tractor towing a Hyundai trailer, owned by Equity Transportation Company (Equity), was traveling East on I-94 at an estimated speed of 60 mph, when the driver failed to react in time upon encountering a queue of slow moving traffic. In the ensuing collision with two other vehicles, the driver of the Kenworth tractor was killed.

The NTSB determined that the probable cause of the accident was the Kenworth driver's failure to stop his vehicle, likely due to a reduced state of alertness associated with failure to obtain adequate rest.

Contributing to the accident was the insufficient regard for and lack of oversight of compliance with Federal commercial motor vehicle Hours Of Service regulations by the truck's owner, which endangered the safety of its drivers and the traveling public. The driver involved in this crash had exceeded the maximum continuous duty hours allowed by Federal regulations. Also contributing was the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) failure to require tamperproof driver's logs, as well as the Michigan Department of Transportation's failure to conduct a merge traffic capacity analysis as part of a bridge rehabilitation project.



Chairman Rosenker Addresses Pipeline Safety

Chairman Mark Rosenker addressed the Damage Prevention Conference in Las Vegas on December 6, an event focused on reducing accidents involving buried pipelines, gas lines and cables. The Chairman said improvements in practices with excavations and one-call notifications, along with faster damage reporting, will all make major contributions to pipeline safety.

Applauding the effectiveness of the 811 national one-call number, which has been promoted as the National Call-Before-You-Dig Number, Rosenker called for its continued promotion to encourage widespread use. He noted that of the 49,000 reported incidents of excavation damage to gas lines in 2006, one-call centers were not contacted in more than half of them.

Chairman Rosenker also highlighted the progress made in reporting practices that emerged from the recommendations the NTSB made after its investigation of a 1998 gas line accident in Minnesota that killed 4 and injured 11. There are now pipeline damage reporting best practices that advise excavators to immediately notify the pipeline operator if their work damages a pipeline, and to notify local authorities if the damage results in a release of natural gas or other hazardous substance. The Chairman concluded his remarks by talking about the challenges facing those involved in excavations in an environment made increasingly complex by a growing web of underground facilities.

Member Higgins Travels to New Mexico

On December 5-6, Board Member Kitty Higgins, accompanied by Dana Schulze, Steve Magladry, and Pam Sullivan from the Office of Aviation Safety, attended the 2007 Technical Analysis and Applications Center (TAAC) conference on unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The conference was hosted by the New Mexico State Physical Science Laboratory and was attended by government and industry representatives (DOD, DOJ, NASA, NOAA, CBP, state and local law enforcement departments) interested in using unmanned aircraft (UA) for civil, public, and military applications. Presenters discussed a variety of uses for unmanned aircraft (which can remain airborne for longer periods than manned aircraft) such as natural disaster assistance, climate change research, security surveillance, tsunami monitoring, and firefighting.

Member Higgins spent December 7 visiting Eclipse Aviation, a very light jet manufacturer located in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Eclipse COO Peg Billson discussed the JetComplete program developed by Eclipse – a comprehensive ownership program that makes the manufacturer the single point of contact for every operational and maintenance requirement – including initial and recurrent type rating training, weather reports, flight plans, scheduling, routine maintenance, and even rushing a service technician to a remote location. Member Higgins also met with product marketing and flight safety employees to discuss safety features of the VLJ and Eclipse's corporate FOQA and ASAP programs. Member Higgins toured the Eclipse manufacturing facilities, observing the assembly line, Eclipse's innovative use of friction stir welding to improve the structural rigidity and reduce the weight of the air frame, and the innovative use of lasers to assist in painting the plane. After a tour of the new training facility at Double Eagle II airport where Eclipse owners and operators receive type rating training, Member Higgins flew a mostly successful flight in one of two Eclipse simulators.

Office of Marine Safety Conducts Marine Investigation Class



On November 28-30, the Office of Marine Safety, with the assistance of the Coast Guard's Office of Investigations and Casualty Analysis, conducted a three-day class on conducting marine accident investigations for 20 investigators from the Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China. The class provided the students with an overview of both Coast Guard and NTSB marine accident investigations rules, and investigative techniques.

The attached photo shows Jack Spencer and Doug Rabe of the Coast Guard, with Capt. Hu Xichen, the head of the delegation, with the Vice Chairman.

NTSB Board Members and Staff Visit BNSF Railroad Headquarters

Chairman Mark Rosenker, Member Steve Chealander, Tom Doyle, Mary Jane Smith and Bob Chipkevich met with key leaders of BNSF Railroad in Haslet, Texas on December 11 to learn about the progress being made on its Electronic Train Management System (ETMS). BNSF leaders included Matt Rose, President and CEO, Carl Ice, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Amy Hawkins, Vice President of Government Affairs, Mark Schulze, Vice President Safety, Training and Operations Support, and Dave Galassi, Assistant Vice President, Network Control Systems. A ride on a train equipped with this new technology demonstrated how ETMS can prevent an engineer from exceeding authorized speed and prevent the train from entering unauthorized track. The positive train control technology is designed to be a safety redundancy system for train operations: to prevent train collisions, over-speed derailments, protect maintenance of way workers, and prevent the movement of trains through switches left in the wrong position. The development and installation of positive train control systems on the nation's railroads is on the Safety Board's list of Most Wanted Transportation Safety Improvements.

Vice Chairman Sumwalt presents at the Aviation Director's Roundtable

In meeting with top-level aviation department leaders for Fortune 100 corporate flight departments, Vice Chairman Sumwalt promoted the theme of an equivalent level of safety for all flights - commercial, on-demand, or general aviation corporate. He encouraged these leaders to commit to train to the highest of commercial standards, and to lead by example in creating and maintaining a culture of safety. "I challenge you to continue working to raise the safety bar."

Vice Chairman Sumwalt also highlighted the important role of each stakeholder in ensuring safety in the aviation industry, and to this end, promoted their active involvement in accident investigations.

The mission of the Aviation Director's Roundtable is to interact and exchange information on topics such as safety and security-related best practices, along with a plethora of issues related to running large corporate flight departments.

Member Hersman Interviewed by AAAE on Runway Safety

On Wednesday, December 5, 2007, Member Debbie Hersman was interviewed on camera by Alexis Horowitz for the Aviation News Today program in the Alexandria, Virginia, studios of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE).

Member Hersman addressed a variety of topics on runway safety, including why the issue has been on the Most Wanted list since its inception in 1990, the purpose of the recommendations that the NTSB has issued, and why improving runway safety is such an urgent matter.

Pat Cariseo (SR) and Peter Knudson (PA) accompanied member Hersman.

The video program is formatted for podcasting and is available free of charge on iTunes.

Inaugural Course of Advanced Skills in Disaster Family Assistance



The inaugural course of Advanced Skills in Disaster Family Assistance was held December 11-13 at the NTSB Training Center. Meeting the unique challenges of victims and families affected by transportation disasters was the primary focus of the class. The course included a panel discussion by three family members who each lost a loved one to an aviation disaster, and helped students better understand the needs of the family members. It also included a discussion on the unique aspects of children and grief, how to deal with families when a criminal act is suspected, and focused on a better understanding of interpersonal and organizational conflict resolution. Additionally, the importance of debriefing and self-care following involvement in a transportation disaster response was discussed. To the left are Sharon Bryson (TDA) and Kathryn Turman of the FBI.

NTSB Training Center Update

As we approach a new calendar year, the NTSB Training Center is filling the classrooms with training events to serve everyone in NTSB. We will begin with "How to do More in Less Time with Less Stress" where you will learn some new time management skills to start the new year right and tackle some of those resolutions that you usually discard. Next is "Mid-Career Retirement Planning" and this is for FERS people only. Let's face it, if you are CSRS you are well beyond your midpoint. So, all of you FERS people, plan to attend this life changing event. Next is the "New Supervisor course" for all of you who have been in supervisory positions and have not received training. You will receive the essential skills to be a top-flight supervisor. The last class of the month is a seminar presented by the Institute for Management Studies called 'Influence and Actions: The Core of Leadership.' This will be held at the Greenbelt Marriott Hotel. So there is an opening slate of courses for everyone in NTSB – see you in training.

January 15 - How to do More in less time and with Less Stress

January 23-24 - Mid Career Retirement Planning for FERS

January 28 - February 1 New Supervisor course

This course is sponsored by the Training Center but delivered elsewhere:

January 25 - Influence and Action: The Core of Leadership

For more information about any of these courses please contact Jim Pritchert at (571) 223-3927 or james.pritchert@ntsb.gov.

Final Edition of the Chairman's Corner for 2007

This will be the final edition of the Chairman's Corner for 2007. Please look for the first edition of 2008 to arrive on January 11, 2008. Chairman Rosenker would like to wish everyone a safe and happy Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year!

